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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7436  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000621

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SCA/CACEN FOR FRESE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/12/2016

TAGS: KIRF PGOV PHUM PINR PREL TX

SUBJECT: TURKMEN POLITICAL COMMISSAR ON THE RAPTURE OF  
PREACHING RUHNAMA

Classified By: CDA JENNIFER BRUSH FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) On June 8 Emboffs interviewed Hojanazar Annanazarov, a "Higher Societal Specialist" in the Ministry of Education, whose sole job is to propagandize the Ruhnama, President Niyazov's so-called "spiritual guide." In a private meeting after his unsuccessful non-immigrant visa interview, Annanazarov, an updated Turkmen version of the Soviet political commissar, provided Emboffs an amusing yet ultimately disturbing look into the mindset of one of Niyazov's propaganda police. Annanazarov's comments coming from the Niyazov side of the looking glass, provide a snapshot of the mindset of a Ruhnama believer. END SUMMARY.

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WHO ARE THE HIGHER SOCIETAL SPECIALISTS?  
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¶2. (C) According to Annanazarov, a 20 year old civil servant, who has worked as a "Higher Societal Specialist" for one year, his position is to ensure that Ministry of Education staff are fully educated on the party line, as fleshed out in the president's spiritual guidebooks Ruhnama I and II. Annanazarov noted a special emphasis on &Turkmen-ness8 and the devotion to Turkmenbashi. While unclear as to how many "specialists" operate in the country, he said that there were six departments of propagandists within the government devoted to spreading the teachings of the Ruhnama in the military, government industry, and other sectors of society. He said that after reading the Ruhnama for the first time in ninth grade, he became so enraptured by its teachings and that he devoted his whole life to the Ruhnama's teachings.

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RUHAMA'S LESSONS  
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¶2. (C) According to Annanazarov, the Ruhnama is every Turkmen's principal guide to life. The book teaches Turkmen about the importance of history, culture, language, and most importantly, respect for Turkmenbashi. Among some of the other lessons, the Ruhnama shows Turkmen men how to treat women with respect and dignity (Note: During his interview, Annanazarov told Conoff that his unemployed wife will stay at home while he travels to the U.S., since "a woman's place is at home, not at work." End Note.) He added that the Ruhnama taught that only those who knew the Ruhnama and were fluent in Turkmen could consider themselves pure Turkmen (Note: Annanazarov's visa application and subsequent written notes made during his discussion were written in Soviet-era Turkmen

Cyrillic, not in Niyazov-era Latin. End Note.)

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RUHNAMA - "THE RELIGION"  
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¶3. (C) Conoff asked Annanazarov about his thoughts regarding whether the Koran or the Ruhnama was more important to Turkmenistan. Annanazarov said that the Koran was more important, however the Koran's teachings are "thin as a needle" when it comes to addressing the need for Turkmen to learn about their culture, history, and spiritual needs, instead these needs were covered by the Ruhnama. When Poloff asked if it was possible for someone to believe in God and not the Ruhnama, Annanazarov said that he did not know, but noted that those who did not live by the Ruhnama were considered "non-believers." When asked if he himself had read the Koran in his entirety, Annanazarov said that he had not, although he has read the Ruhnama many times. When asked if he had read other &great8 books for comparison,s sake, Annanazarov replied that he read only the writings of the famous Turkmen poet (and state-sanctioned literary hero) Magtumguly, whose writings complement the teachings of the Ruhnama.

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COMMENT  
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¶5. (C) This encounter with Annanazarov reveals the disturbing effectiveness of centering all learning around one book, the Ruhnama. Annanazarov represents the vanguard of the upcoming &lost generation8 -- those youth who have grown up in the "Golden Century" of the Turkmen people, and have no basis for comparison, no capacity for critical

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thinking and worst of all, no sources of outside information. With an educational and societal program dedicated to glorifying and studying the Ruhnama, Turkmenistan's youth are finding it increasingly more difficult to compete academically in the outside world.

¶6. (C) Annanazarov comments about the Ruhnama,s relationship with the Koran are noteworthy given the regime's sensitivity to suggestions that the regime considers Ruhnamaism to be a virtual new state religion. Annanazarov's contention that the Ruhnama with carefully-selected elements of the Koran is the defacto religion for Turkmen, while not an official statement, shows just how ingrained the book's influence is on the younger elements of Turkmenistani society. The emergence of people like Annanazarov is further evidence of why the USG needs to reinforce its efforts here in the educational and cultural spheres, and expose Turkmenistan to an alternative to the Ruhnama utopia. END

COMMENT.

BRUSH